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Trouble Comes In Bunches For Nixon

Things just don't seem to be working out for Richard M. Nixon these days.

In the course of his strenuous campaign for the governorship of California he has managed to stir controversy and make himself look bad no less than three times in the space of a few days.

This is better than par for the course even for a man like Mr. Nixon who has a lamentable talent for involving himself in distasteful affairs and accumulating a host of unrestrained enemies eager to exploit the most innocent of them to the fullest.

Most of the former presidential candidate's most recent troubles stem from his book. Actually he should have known better than to write it in the first place; politicians have wished for centuries that "mine enemy would write a book," supplying them with ammunition to hurl at the author. He got no worse than he should have anticipated.

Still, it was most ironic that one of the errors that rose to haunt him from his literary work concerned Alger Hiss whose downfall elevated Mr. Nixon into the public spotlight for the first time.

Writing of the case, Mr. Nixon seemed to give support to Hiss' arguments that he had been "framed" by government agencies. A statement from Mr. Nixon's office later declared that a research assistant's mistake had been made and the text of the book did not report what Mr. Nixon had intended to say. Attorney General Robert Kennedy subsequently declared, also, that the book was factually wrong.

This seemed to clear up the point of doubt, but where does it leave Mr. Nixon who, presumably, read the galley proofs of the book before it was ordered into final printing?

An even greater public furor was stirred by another chapter in the manuscript. Mr. Nixon said that his anger was directed toward John F. Kennedy only once during the entire presidential campaign. This was when Mr. Kennedy publicly advocated military support for Cuban opposition to Fidel Castro.

Mr. Nixon declared that Mr. Kennedy had been informed, as part of the White House briefings given the Democratic candidate during the campaign, that plans

were underway to back an invasion of Cuba. This being so, Mr. Kennedy's advocacy of these plans, which were top secret, was not only unethical politics but a gross breach of security.

But was Mr. Kennedy actually told of the Cuban invasion plans and our involvement in them?

No, said Allen Dulles, Republican head of the Central Intelligence Agency which was responsible for the briefings.

This time, however, Mr. Nixon was not so willing to retreat. He issued a statement declaring again that it was his understanding that Mr. Kennedy had been briefed to the fullest on all details of domestic and foreign matters including the Cuban situation.

Without Mr. Dulles' backing, however, or that of some other high official in the previous administration, Mr. Nixon's story loses much of its impact to say the least.

The third of Mr. Nixon's stumblings is of far less sweeping importance but, curiously, may have a greater effect on the California campaign. It came when he made an off-hand wise crack about Mr. Kennedy and other "carpetbaggers" who were coming to California to campaign for Democratic Gov. Pat Brown.

This sounds like a trivial mat-

ter. Indeed, we were surprised that it created even a ripple of dissatisfaction. Only in the South, we had imagined, does the term "carpetbagger" connote something despicable, shameful and contemptible. But Californians, we are told, interpret it much as we do and many of them resent it being pinned on the President.

With such little things are the scales of elections sometimes tipped. An incautious word of phrase has often meant the difference between victory and defeat no matter what else a candidate may have said during the course of a campaign.

None of this is to count Mr. Nixon out of the race yet. He has overcome greater odds before. Perhaps this will provide him with the spur he needs.

But his campaign is sputtering, of that there can be little doubt. And the causes of his setbacks are mostly of his own creation, embellished by his implacable enemies.